

Be Responsible. Be Ready.

YOUR GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES



Howard County, Maryland

Important Information

**During emergency situations
recorded information is available by calling
410-313-2900**

If officials determine that circumstances demand a greater response, this phone line will convert to a staffed, phone bank to help answer residents' questions.

Official information will also be available online from
Howard County Government at www.co.ho.md.us
and on GTV, Comcast Channel 70

Other Useful Phone Numbers

For all life-threatening emergencies 911

Police (non-emergency) 410-313-3200

Fire (non-emergency) 410-313-6000

Emergency Management 410-313-6030

Health Department (main number) 410-313-6300
(communicable disease) 410-313-6110

Grassroots Crisis Hotline (24 hour) 410-531-6677

Public Information 410-313-2022

Volunteer Center 410-715-3172

Helpful Online Information Sources

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: www.ready.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

Maryland Emergency Management: www.mema.state.md.us

Maryland Health & Mental Hygiene: www.dhmh.state.md.us

Howard County Health Department: www.hchealth.org

Community Emergency Response Network: www.cern.us

The Weather Channel: www.weather.com

To Volunteer

Registering as a volunteer before a disaster can help you learn about opportunities that best utilize your skills, knowledge and interests. If you are interested in making your community stronger through disaster preparation and response initiatives:

Visit www.cern.us to register as a member of
Howard County's Citizen Corps through the
Community Emergency Response Network (CERN)
OR contact the

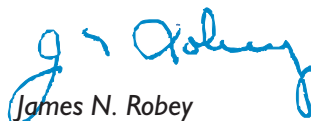
Volunteer Center Serving Howard County 410-715-3172.
www.volunteerhoward.org

Dear Howard County Resident,

In my years as Howard County Police Chief and County Executive, I've learned that preparedness is the best response to unforeseen emergencies. In the past few years community preparedness for disaster has taken on a whole new meaning. As individuals and as a community, we must be ready to handle unexpected emergencies, whether they are acts of terrorism, severe storms, or other disasters.

As we mark the passing of the third anniversary of September 11, 2001, we are reminded how important it is to plan for safety. The residents of Howard County can be confident that their government is doing all it can to stay prepared. The same should be true of you and your family.

There are steps you can take now, well in advance of an emergency, whether it is a severe winter storm or terrorist event in the region. Please read these guidelines. Share them with your family, friends and neighbors. Hold a planning session and take all of the recommended action steps. Families can—and do—cope with disaster by preparing in advance. Knowing what to do is your best protection, as well as your personal responsibility.


James N. Robey
Howard County Executive

We can't help you if you can't hear us!

BUY A BATTERY POWERED RADIO

Getting official information during an emergency is vital to your safety. Unfortunately power outages often accompany disasters and restrict your ability to receive information via traditional electronic sources. The most reliable source of information is a good battery powered radio, preferably one with an optional crank or solar energy source. Local officials will ensure that information is sent to emergency alert radio stations as well as other media. It's up to you, however, to have a resource in your home that lets you hear their instructions, even when the power is out.

Emergency Alert System (EAS) Radio Stations

WTOP-AM 1500

WTOP-FM 107.7

WBAL-AM 1090

WIYY-FM 97.9

WMAL-AM 630

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Health Department.



Know The Hazards That May Affect Howard County...

Natural

A variety of natural and weather-related emergencies have struck Howard County in the past, including tornadoes, hurricanes, severe winter weather, heat and drought conditions, wildfires, lightning strikes, floods and earthquakes. Each type of natural disaster requires a unique response. Please keep the specifics of these situations in mind as you plan for ways your family will react.

Know the terminology used by weather forecasters. A **watch** means that severe weather is **possible** in your area. A **warning** means that the weather system is **expected** in your area.

Biological

Unlike other emergencies, a biological event could take days or weeks to notice. A biological threat can be the deliberate or accidental release of germs or other biological substances that can make you sick. Most agents must be inhaled, enter the body through a break in the skin, or be eaten to cause sickness.

Some biological agents, such as anthrax, are not contagious. Others, like smallpox, can be transmitted from person to person. While many biological agents can cause outbreaks of disease, the following germs are of the utmost concern: anthrax, botulism, plague, smallpox, tularemia, and viral hemorrhagic fevers, such as ebola, yellow fever, or dengue. These agents are relatively easy and inexpensive to produce. They cause death and disabling disease and can easily be distributed in aerosol form over large geographic areas.

The public will be notified what to do or look for in the event of a bioterrorist act. There is no reason to store a supply of antibiotics, since different treatments are needed for different illnesses. If needed, an emergency supply of medicines or vaccines from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) will be available for county residents. You will need to listen for official instructions about the location of distribution sites near you.

For general protection, make sure that your family's routine immunizations are up-to-date and practice good personal

hygiene - **hand washing** is the best way to prevent the spread of many respiratory and food borne illnesses.

For more information about specific diseases, go online to www.bt.cdc.gov or call the Howard County Health Department.

Technological

Technological or man-made emergencies are uncommon but can devastate a community. Examples of such events are transportation accidents (plane crash, train derailment, highway accident); hazardous materials spills or a nuclear power plant accident; extended failures of utility systems such as electric power, natural gas, water, sewer or telephone; lengthy interruptions in supplies of gasoline, heating oil or natural gas.

Terrorist Acts

Terrorist acts against the United States could involve conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, "terrorists are working to obtain biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons, and the threat of an attack is very real." While there is no way to predict what will happen, or your personal circumstances, there are simple things you can do now to prepare. All Americans should learn more about the ways these potential threats could occur and consider ways to be better prepared should an attack occur.



Take Time To Plan And Prepare With Your Family...

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. Consider the various scenarios that could disrupt your daily life, affecting electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, telephone service and transportation. Two simple actions that you can take to prepare are to develop an Emergency Plan and an Emergency Supply Kit.



Create An Emergency Plan:

1. **Post emergency phone numbers** by all telephones. **Teach children how to dial 911** and to make long distance calls.
2. Ensure that all adults in the home **know how to turn off the water, gas and electricity at main switches**. Do not attempt to restore gas service yourself; call BGE.
3. Draw a floor plan of your home and **mark two escape routes** from each room.
4. **Pick a friend or relative** for family members to call and report where they are if separated (an out-of-state contact is best in case local phone service is affected).
5. **Pick two meeting places**, one near your home and one outside your neighborhood in case you cannot go home after the emergency.
6. **Keep family records in a water and fireproof safe**. Inexpensive models can be purchased at most hardware stores.
7. **Take a basic First Aid and CPR course**.
8. **Make plans for your pets**, since pets are not permitted in shelters or some hotels.
9. **Plan how to care for family members who may need assistance** such as relatives with **disabilities or those who are elderly**.
10. **Conduct a home hazard hunt** to remove, repair, or brace anything that can move, fall, break or cause a fire in a disaster.

Prepare An Emergency Supply Kit

Most emergency planning experts suggest having enough supplies to last you and your family for three to five days. Keep the items that you would most likely need in one easy-to-carry container such as a plastic storage bin, backpack or duffel bag. Store it in a convenient place in your home and put a smaller version in your car. Check your supplies and re-think your needs every 6 months.

- **Water** - store a supply of water (one gallon per person per day) in sealed, unbreakable containers. Keep in a cool, dark place with the date labeled on the container. Replace every 6 months.
- **Food** - store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that do not require refrigeration, cooking, a lot of water or a lengthy preparation. Such items might include ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables; canned or boxed juices; high-energy foods like peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars and trail mix; vitamins; food for infants or persons on special diets; cookies; hard candy; instant coffee; sweetened cereals; and bulk food items such as wheat, powdered milk, corn and soybeans that can be stored for long periods of time.
- **First aid kit** - include sterile gauze and adhesive pads in assorted sizes; sterile, non-allergic adhesive tape; scissors; tweezers; needle; thermometer; moistened towelettes; antiseptic ointment; tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant; safety pins; soap or hand sanitizer; disposable gloves; sunscreen.
- **Over-the-counter medications** - aspirin and aspirin-free pain medicine, anti-diarrhea medications, laxatives, antacids, Syrup of Ipecac to cause vomiting as advised; activated charcoal (in case of poisoning).
- **Clothes and bedding** - assemble one or two complete changes of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes, blankets or sleeping bags, hat and gloves, thermal underwear, and sunglasses.
- **Tools and supplies** - battery-powered radio; flashlight; extra batteries; plastic ware and paper goods; manual can opener and utility knife; pliers; wrench for shut-off valve on gas and water; carbon monoxide and smoke detectors; small ABC fire extinguisher; personal tent; waterproof matches; plastic storage containers; signal flares; whistle; paper and pencil; needle and thread; plastic sheeting; and a local map.
- **Sanitation supplies** - toilet paper, soap, liquid detergent, plastic garbage bags with ties, a plastic bucket with lid, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach.

- **Specialty items:**

Babies - formula, diapers and wipes, bottles, powdered milk, and medications.

Adults - medications and prescriptions, denture needs, eyeglasses and/or contact lenses and related supplies.

Entertainment - games, books, and quiet toys for children.

- **Important family information** - copies of wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, passports, stocks and bonds, birth certificates, marriage licenses, immunization records, important phone numbers, credit card accounts, social security cards, and other personal family records.

Don't forget cash and/or travelers checks and an extra set of car and house keys.

Emergency Planning For Business

The time to think about what you need to do in the event of a disruption to your business is before you face a crisis. Your employees need to know now what to do in the event of an emergency. Business owners should develop an emergency plan that includes:

- Maintaining a list of emergency numbers of employees so their families can be contacted if necessary.
- Having a plan in place to safely evacuate employees and customers.
- Practicing the plan with staff.
- Backing up computer data regularly and storing off-site.
- Purchasing ample insurance coverage to minimize losses.
- Identifying crucial business operations and developing plans to ensure their continuation in the event of an emergency.

If An Emergency Occurs... **DO NOT PANIC.** Listen for instructions from your local authorities. You may be directed to follow one of two courses of action: shelter in place or evacuate.

Shelter In Place

"Sheltering in place" means protecting yourself where you are by staying there until given further instructions or the all-clear. If you are asked to shelter in place...

- Go inside quickly if you are outdoors.
- Do not call 911 or otherwise use the telephone unless you are reporting a life-threatening emergency.
- Move to an interior room with as few windows as possible and close the door. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air. In the case of severe weather or a radiologic event, the shelter should be low in the home.
- Listen to a portable radio for announcements from emergency officials in your area that it is safe to leave the shelter.

If there is an airborne threat

- Close and lock all outside windows and doors for a better seal.
- Turn off all heating and cooling systems including fans and close any fireplace dampers.
- Tape plastic over any windows in the rooms. Use duct tape around windows and doors to make an unbroken seal. Also tape over any vents, electrical outlets or other openings in the room. Wet towels may be used if tape is not available.
- You can use the sink and toilet normally, but use stored water rather than tap water. Remember, the hot water heater can be used as a water source.
- If you are in a car, close windows and vents and drive to seek permanent shelter.



Evacuation

Evacuating means leaving the area that is affected by the potential hazard such as an approaching hurricane, an industrial chemical accident or a fire. If you are asked to evacuate, here's what to do:

- Heed the advice!
- Wear sturdy shoes and appropriate clothing for the conditions.
- Close and lock windows and doors.
- Unplug appliances if time permits.
- Take your portable emergency supply kit with you.
- Follow instructions and evacuation routes designated by emergency personnel.

Public Emergency Shelters

The Howard County Office of Emergency Management may establish community-based shelters for local residents when conditions warrant. Normally, shelters are set up in public high schools, community centers, church halls or other locations where residents can seek refuge, sleep and eat. Public shelters in Howard County will be operated and staffed by the Central Maryland Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Howard County Department of Citizen Services.

Persons needing shelter are asked to bring:

- a sleeping bag or bedroll
- a change of clothing
- bathing and sanitary supplies, including diapers, as needed
- medicines, denture and eye care supplies, and any special dietary foods

With the exception of guide dogs, pets are not permitted in public shelters.

Include Pets In Your Plan

Emergency planning should include all members of the family, including pets. If you must relocate to a shelter, your pets will not be allowed. Try to locate a friend, a relative, or a kennel outside your immediate area that can keep your animal. Put together a basic disaster kit for your pets, in case you must leave home quickly and leave your pet at a safe location.

Recommended items include:

- A pet carrier for each animal large enough for your pet to stand, turn, and lie down
- ID photo, vaccination and medical records, and licenses
- A leash/muzzle, water and medications
- Pet food (for dogs a low protein formula will produce less stool, a benefit when the dog is kept indoors)
- Disposable bowls and a manual can opener
- Cleaning supplies - trash bags, bleach (for disinfectant), towels, paper towels, and other waste disposal supplies



Photo by Pete Hammond

When Electrical Power Is Lost...

Disruption of electrical service can occur as a result of many things such as lightning, high winds, ice, and equipment failure. Usually service is restored within a short time. However, major power outages can occasionally last for extended periods. When power is lost, you should:

- **Check to see if your neighbors have power.**
Loss of power may be due to a blown fuse or a tripped circuit. If your neighbors are also without service, call your local power company. If you must go outside, watch for downed power lines and do not go near them or touch anything that may be in contact with the lines. Report downed power lines immediately.
- **Turn off all major appliances.**
When major appliances are left on, they could overload electric lines when power is restored causing a second outage.
- **Practice safe food handling.**
Food in your refrigerator and freezer is safe for up to two hours. Open the door as little as possible to keep temperature constant. If the outage goes beyond two hours, remember food in a half full freezer will hold safely up to 24 hours. If the freezer is full, food will keep for 48 hours.

After two hours, food in the refrigerator, particularly dairy products, meat, fish, eggs and spoilable leftovers, should be packed in a cooler surrounded by ice. Before you cook or eat anything, always check the temperature with a digital thermometer. **THROW AWAY ALL FOOD OVER 40 degrees Farenheight.**
- **Use flashlights or battery-powered lanterns to light your home.**
Candles and kerosene lanterns are not recommended because of inherent fire hazards.

- **Find SAFE ways to keep warm.**

Select a single room, ideally one that gets sunlight during the day, where families can gather. Dress in layers to maintain body heat for longer periods of time. Use alternative heating sources such as fireplaces, wood burning stoves and kerosene heaters with extreme care. Never leave them unattended.

FOLLOW THESE IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS:

Make sure fireplaces are in proper working order and inspected. When removing ashes, make sure they are cooled and placed in a metal container. Kerosene heaters should always be used in an extremely well-ventilated room and never refueled inside the home. Never use gas ovens or stovetops to heat homes. Never use charcoal or propane grills inside. Keep gas meters and vents clear of ice and snow.

REMEMBER, some fuels pose a serious risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if used under improper conditions.

- **Consider the impact on appliances and utilities.**

During a power outage, wells, plumbing, gas appliances and hot water heaters may all be affected. Water systems with electric pumps will not operate and an alternate water supply may be necessary. Plumbing can freeze in cold weather, so remember to turn off pumps and drain supply lines, water heaters, boilers and traps in drains of tubs, sinks, commodes, washing machines and dishwashers. Also turn off supply lines to outdoor spigots to avoid flooding when temperatures rise. Gas appliances may not work because electricity is required for ignition or valve operation. Water heaters that are drained to prevent damage from freezing must have their power circuit shut off. Always follow manufacturer instructions when shutting down or starting up these mechanisms.

- **Use alternative power supplies with caution.**

Portable emergency generators may be used to provide limited electrical power during an emergency; however, **NEVER FUEL OR OPERATE A GENERATOR INSIDE THE HOME OR ADJOINING GARAGE.** Without adequate ventilation and proper safety precautions, gas powered generators pose serious, life threatening conditions. Risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and fire casualties are high if manufacturers' instructions are not followed. Make sure that generators are installed in compliance with local utility guidelines and are equipped with a double-throw transfer switch to protect equipment and prevent feedback on power lines. For additional information on the proper use of emergency generators, call your power company.

- **Have a contingency plan for life support equipment.**

With your doctor's approval, list all respirators, ventilators, oxygen equipment, and other life sustaining devices with your power company. Plan for both an alternative power source and the relocation of those individuals who are dependent on such equipment.



Schools And Safety

Protective actions are in place to keep your children safe during an emergency. Each school has procedures to shelter or evacuate children and to provide a lock-down or modified lock-down for security-related emergencies. School buildings provide a safe shelter and, in many situations, children are safer in school than in the home or on the highway.

Parents will be notified of an emergency through a variety of sources:

- Internet: www.hcpss.org
- Radio/Television: news media
- The Knowledge Network, Cable Channel 72
- Email: www.schools-out.com (you can sign up to receive school closing information via email sent directly to your home or office)

Parents' Responsibilities:

If an emergency occurs during school hours:

- Do not drive to the school unless directed to do so.
- Do not call the school.
- Tune to news media for emergency instructions.
- Bring identification prior to picking up your child.

**For more information call the
Howard County Public School System
Office of Safety, Environment and Risk Management
at 410-313-6739.**

How You Can Help Build A More Resilient Community...

Working together before a disaster occurs will better prepare a community to deal with the aftermath. As Howard County's local CITIZEN CORPS, the Community Emergency Response Network (CERN) provides education, training and volunteer opportunities for individuals who are interested in being proactive to community-wide emergencies. Visit www.cern.us to register as a member of CERN OR contact the Volunteer Center Serving Howard County 410-715-3172.

Neighbors helping neighbors is also important.

- Establish a neighborhood network to help each other in case of an emergency. Know the specialized needs of neighbors who may be vulnerable due to age, a disability or a medical condition.
- Know the specialized skills of people living close by (doctor, nurse, electrician, carpenter, etc.) who may be helpful following an emergency.
- Talk with each other ahead of time about your neighborhood response potential and plan in advance.



Recovering From An Emergency... *You and your family may face emotional and psychological effects following an emergency experience. Reactions may include:*

- Restless sleep or nightmares.
- Anger or wanting revenge.
- Numbness or lack of emotion.
- Needing to keep active, restlessness.
- Needing to talk about your experiences.
- Loss of appetite, weight loss, headaches, mood swings.

These are normal reactions to stressful situations and it is important to let everyone react in their own way as part of the recovery process.

If you feel overwhelmed and need to talk to someone immediately, call the Grassroots Crisis Hotline at 410-531-6677.

IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO:

- Spend time with your family and friends and talk about what happened. Try to realistically evaluate and plan for the chance it could happen again.
- Get plenty of rest and exercise.
- Consult your minister or spiritual advisor.
- Children may need special reassurance. Encourage them to share their feelings even if you must listen to the stories repeatedly—this is a common way for them to grasp what they experienced.
- Take a break from the news. Strike a balance between keeping up to date on the disaster and pursuing enjoyable activities.
- Volunteer to assist emergency victims.



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www.ready.gov

Howard County Health Department
6751 Columbia Gateway Drive
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